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TAGS: [MARR](#) [SOCI](#) [EN](#)
SUBJECT: ESTONIA: PDAS VERGA DISCUSSES DISASTER
PLANNING, GWOT WITH MINISTRIES OF DEFENSE, INTERIOR

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On the margins of his participation in a Baltic Defense College seminar, OSD PDAS for Homeland Defense Peter Verga met with the Secretaries General of the Ministries of Defense and Internal Affairs on June 1. Verga shared insights on the challenges of inter-agency coordination and the civilian/military nexus in disaster planning in the United States, and promised to forward information on the U.S. National Response Plan development process. The Estonians told Verga they were extremely pleased with the recent Shamrock Key exercise. The MoD noted that effective exchange of information with partners will be critical to Estonia's mission in Afghanistan's Helmand Province. End summary.

Ministry of Interior
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¶2. (SBU) In a June 1 meeting Minister of Interior Secretary General Mart Kraft thanked PDAS Verga for the

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U.S. role in the recent Shamrock Key joint exercise. It had been an important step in helping the Estonians test response capabilities to terror threats. Kraft said the GOE would appreciate further joint training, including in the area of cyber-crime. Training/exercises that involved former Soviet states would be particularly useful on that score. Verga noted that the FBI had the lead on cyber-crime. U.S./Estonia cooperation in the area was strong, but Verga said he would take Estonia's continued interest in cooperation on the fight against cyber-crime back to Washington.

¶3. (SBU) Kraft highlighted challenges facing Estonia in disaster planning and civil defense. The Estonians had conducted several exercises testing responses to potential incidents at Russia's Sosnovy Bor nuclear power plant, located roughly 50 miles from the Estonian border. Bird flu preparedness was another priority, as was response to chemical incidents. Cross-border cooperation on such efforts had been strong with Baltic neighbors, but remained problematic with Russia.

¶4. (SBU) Two oil spills that had affected the Estonian coastline in early 2006 had provided a "good lesson" at a relatively modest price, Kraft said. The GOE was now paying more attention to oil spill issues and devoting more resources to improving prevention and clean-up capabilities.

Ministry of Defense
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¶5. (SBU) In a separate meeting, Verga thanked Ministry of Defense Secretary General Lauri Almann for Estonia's

continued support in the GWOT, including in Iraq and Afghanistan. Almann noted that Estonia continued to be guided by the Istanbul targets for deployable forces, and aimed to have 350 troops available for deployment by 2010 (Estonia currently had 243 troops abroad). Resources were being drawn down in Kosovo and redeployed to the PRT mission in Afghanistan's Helmand province. The MoD understood that Afghanistan would be "a very difficult mission" and the GOE was taking it "very seriously." Effective exchange of information with partners would be critical to success there.

16. (SBU) Almann described MoD assistance activity in Georgia and suggested that a trilateral Estonia-Georgia-U.S. approach to projects there might be particularly effective. Estonia had undertaken such efforts in the past with the UK. Estonia's small state perspective was helpful in getting Georgian defense planners to understand that their challenges were not unique.

17. (SBU) Almann expressed particular interest in PDAS Verga's description of civilian/military cooperation in disaster preparedness and response, and said the Estonians would be grateful for further insight on U.S. experience in this area. The MoD had helped to stand up a cell for inter-agency crisis management and operations cooperation six months ago. It was making progress in capacity-building, though legislative restrictions on the MoD's domestic peacetime role presented an especially acute challenge. The MoD was looking at ways to loosen the strictures. As an example, Almann said draft legislation currently before Estonia's Legal Chancellor would clarify whether the Prime Minister or Minister of Defense could authorize the downing of renegade civilian aircraft in Estonian airspace.

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